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SUBJECT: NANGARHAR GOVERNOR SHERZAI CALLS FOR A STRONGER INTERIOR
MINISTRY, PREFERABLY WITH HIMSELF AT THE HELM

Classified by: CDDEA Ambassador E. Anthony Wayne; reasons 1.4 b and
d.

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: During a December 5 event opening a Women's Police Training Center in Jalalabad, Nangarhar Governor Sherzai called for the Ministry of the Interior (MOI) to be strengthened and given authority over provincial governors, the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG), Customs Police, prisons, and Presidential Security. Claiming that Afghanistan had been more secure in the past when the MOI had all of these authorities, he also called for a reduction in the number of ministries, on the grounds that there were many that served no real purpose. During a subsequent meeting with Ambassador Wayne, Sherzai said President Karzai had offered him several Governorships, including the option of remaining in Nangarhar, as well as the Public Works Ministry, but also said he would consider him for MOI, "if the USG approved." Ambassador Wayne explained that the U.S. had not focused on specific names in discussions with President Karzai, but only on the qualities a candidate should bring to the Cabinet. In his speech at the opening, Ambassador Wayne stressed the importance of strengthening the ANP, increasing the role of women in the Police, providing job opportunities for women, and fighting corruption. END SUMMARY.

SHERZAI CALLS FOR STRONGER MOI

¶2. (C) During a December 5 opening ceremony to open Afghanistan's second Women's Police Training Center, Nangarhar Governor Gul Aga Sherzai focused his speech on the need to strengthen the Ministry of the Interior (MOI) by giving it authority over all Governors, the Independent Directorate of Local Government (IDLG), Customs Police, prisons, and Presidential Security. Sherzai drew a link between these authorities, which the MOI had in the past, and peace and stability in Afghanistan, but argued that after they were given to other Ministries, the country has become less secure. The new structure had created a gap between provincial governors and the ANP, which should be put back together under one chain of command or else insurgents would take advantage, he argued. Sherzai reported that he would take a proposal to President Karzai on this subject during a December 7 meeting in Kabul. Sherzai said he had also told President Karzai to do away with those ministries or independent agencies that serve no real purpose. Sherzai relayed that Karzai had promised him that he would establish a professional committee to review the structure of the government and look at merging and consolidating ministries. The Nangarhar Governor also called for legal reforms to give the police greater powers, for example extending the period police can detain suspects to 72 hours in order to give them more time to conduct investigations.

¶3. (C) In an aside during the ceremony, Sherzai added that he had told President Karzai to be careful about whom he surrounds himself in his next government. Sherzai asserted he had told Karzai that he was being blamed for bad things because of his close friends and their bad reputations. He should surround himself with trustworthy people, not warlords like Dostum or Fahim. Sherzai also requested a meeting with Ambassador Eikenberry, saying they had only met once, but the meeting had been short.

SHERZAI SEEKS SUPPORT TO BE NEXT INTERIOR MINISTER

¶4. (C) During a meeting with Ambassador Wayne following the ceremony, Sherzai asserted that he was focused on reconstruction and was working hard to ensure there would be no poppy cultivation in Nangarhar. But these tasks could not be accomplished without a strong government, especially a strong MOI. He reported that President Karzai had offered him the job of Minister of Public Works, or the governorships of Herat, Balkh, and Kandahar, or to remain in Nangarhar. Karzai reportedly said that that he would also consider appointing him Minister of the Interior, but "needed approval from the Americans." Claiming that Marshal Fahim had earlier asked Karzai to appoint ANA Chief of Staff Bismullah Khan to that position, but that the Americans had not approved, Sherzai said he would meet the President on 7 December to discuss the issue again. Many of the Karzai's other allies were pressing to have their people placed in government positions, Sherzai said but he had told the President to establish a commission to vet candidates so they would be selected on merit, Sherzai stated.

¶5. (C) Ambassador Wayne responded that in discussions with President Karzai about his new cabinet, the USG had not focused on specific names, but on the qualities that a candidate should bring to a cabinet level job and the importance of certain portfolios.

¶6. (C) Sherzai responded that his first preference was to stay in Nangarhar, though he would fill whatever job the President choose for him. In closing, he observed that INL had helped fund his anti-poppy public outreach campaigns for the last two years, but was not doing so in 2009. Ambassador Wayne agreed to look into the request.

OPENING OF AFGHANISTAN'S SECOND WOMENS POLICE TRAINING CENTER

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¶7. (C) The Women's Training Center that opened at the Regional Training Center in Rodat will be the second such facility in Afghanistan after Kabul and will begin its first course on December 6 with nine female recruits. The facility was dedicated to the memory of LTC Malalai Kaker, the late head of the Kandahar Crimes Against Women Department and mother of six, who was assassinated by Taliban outside her home in September 2008. In his speech, Ambassador Wayne stressed the importance of strengthening the ANP, increasing the role of women in the ANP, providing job opportunities for women, and fighting corruption. He thanked the female recruits and their families for the risks they were taking for their country. The ceremony was also attended by General Ahmad Zai, MOI Training and Education Coordinator; the ANP Regional Training Center Director; BG Macdonald, CSTC-A; as well as representatives of the Jalalabad PRT and INL Washington.

COMMENT

¶8. (C) Sherzai is doubtless making a last minute push to become Interior Minister as Karzai readies his cabinet announcement. Sherzai, however, has for several months both publicly and privately advocated for a stronger Ministry of the Interior. While he certainly would like the Ministry to be stronger (if he is charge of it), his comments are also motivated by his own frustration as governor in dealing with the police. He has often expressed frustration with his lack of authority over the police in his province and with the different chains of command for different security agencies, which he believes makes it harder to provide security. END COMMENT.

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